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C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 000784

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/25/2013

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [GT](#) [UNHRC](#)

SUBJECT: GUATEMALA RESPONSE TO CUBAN CRACKDOWN AGAINST
OPPOSITION

REF: A. STATE 75175

[1](#)B. GUATEMALA 770

Classified By: PolCouns David Lindwall for reason 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) In a March 22 meeting with President Alfonso Portillo, the Ambassador raised USG concerns (Ref A) over the Cuban crackdown against the opposition. As noted in Ref B, Portillo acknowledged that the arrests carried out by the Cuban Government were worrisome, but stopped short of committing the GOG to issuing a public statement condemning the arrests.

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador raised the matter again with Vice President Francisco Reyes Lopez on March 25, noting that failure by the international community to condemn these arrests would undermine those who are trying to bring about peaceful democratic change in Cuba. The Ambassador added that the dissidents, who were simply exercising rights that all other inhabitants of the hemisphere have, look to the UN Commission on Human Rights as a forum where the international community calls on the Cuban Government to respect their basic human rights. Failure by Guatemala to vote for a resolution calling on the Cuban Government to respect basic human rights, especially in view of the recent wave of arrests, would be a severe blow to these individuals who are paying for their defense of human rights with incarceration. The Ambassador asked the Vice President what arguments opponents of this resolution could possibly have to oppose a call on the Cuban Government to respect basic human rights. Vice President Reyes dodged the question and blamed "the Congress" for opposition to Guatemala voting with us in favor of a Cuba resolution. He said, however, that no decision had been made regarding the vote, and did not rule out that the recent wave of arrests would be weighed at the moment Guatemala decided on its vote.

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador was to deliver the talking points to Foreign Minister Gutierrez on March 25, but the Foreign Minister canceled the meeting due to illness. In his stead, the Ambassador spoke with Vice Foreign Minister Jorge Perez and raised the same concerns. Perez promised to relay our views to the Foreign Minister and inform us of any response.

[1](#)4. (C) PolCouns met with MFA Director of Multilateral Affairs Giovanni Castillo on March 25 to deliver Ref A demarche and talking points. Castillo said the GOG was aware of the arrest of dissidents by the Cuban regime, and said he would forward to the Foreign Minister our request for the GOG to make a public statement in support of the dissidents. He asked if other countries in the hemisphere had made statements. Castillo said he would inform us of any decision by the GOG in this regard.

HAMILTON